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NATURAL HISTORY MISCELLANY.

BOTANY.

LAKE SUPERIOR PLANTS COMPARED WITH EASTERN SPECIMENS.—Not long ago my attention was called by a friend, a distinguished botanist at the East, to the remarkably large and robust development of some of my Lake Superior specimens, as compared with the same species of plants found in the New England States. This is particularly observable in the plants of the earlier part of the season, where one would be led least to expect it. Among the most remarkable are the *Carices*, most of which are in full perfection by the early summer. Of these I would specify the following, a few out of many, as worthy of note in the above respect:—*Carex Backii* Boot, *C. varia* Muhl., in its many forms, *C. Houghtonii* Torr., *C. laxiflora* Lam., and *C. lenticularis* Michx. The Gramineæ, however, exhibit this condition in the most extraordinary degree. The Mountain Rice (*Oryzopsis asperifolia* Michx.) I found in flower and about two feet high by the latter part of May. The Holy-grass (*Hierochloa borealis* Roem. and Schul.), in flower early in June was over two feet high, the leaves, stalk, panicle and its component parts, proportionately large. This fragrant grass the Indian women weave into baskets and fancy articles, which they dispose of to travellers. *Kæleria cristata* Pers., growing in shady woods along rivers, flowered in July, and was rank and tall, often over five feet in height. Several species of *Glyceria* and *Poa* are also worthy of mention as singularly luxuriant. *Triticum violaceum* Hornem., I found on the northern shore of the lake, on the few gravel beaches, where it attained a height of over four feet, having an extraordinarily robust culm. The grain was well formed by the latter part of August, and up to the early part of September the plant was untouched by frosts. This is peculiarly interesting as connected with our cereals, and remembering that our common Wheat (*Triticum vulgare* Linn.) is of the same genus.

The large amount of snow which falls in the region of Lake Superior, and lies upon the land, a great warm blanket several feet thick, undisturbed by the variable temperature which affects other places, but which is unknown there, effectually protects the soil from all frost, and has a marked influence on the vegetation. The snow remains till late, and when it disappears the ground has not the delay of getting thawed out as elsewhere. I have frequently found snowdrifts in the woods from one to two feet deep, which remained well into June under the shade of the cedars, and this when it was unpleasantly warm in the openings. The sun, too, has a greater power there than commonly supposed, almost counterbalancing the shortness of the summer. Violets, which I found in May (*Viola blanda* Willd., *V. Selkirkii* Pursh., etc.), had evidently been blossoming during the winter, which corroborates what an old resident of

Lake Superior told me, viz., that any time during the winter violets could be obtained by digging away the snow. *Adenocaulon bicolor* Hook., I found in June, three feet high, in full blossom, and having almost a tropical luxuriance; and towards the middle of that month *Lathyrus ochroleucus* Hook., twined its elegant wreaths of cream-colored or pale-yellow flowers in graceful profusion. Instances might be multiplied did space permit.—HENRY GILLMAN, *Detroit, Mich.*

ZOÖLOGY.

GLYCERINE FOR PRESERVING NATURAL COLORS OF MARINE ANIMALS.—While collecting on the coast of Maine last summer I made numerous experiments with glycerine, most of which were eminently satisfactory. At the present time I have a large lot of specimens which have the colors perfectly preserved and nearly as brilliant as in life. Among these are many kinds of Crustacea, such as Shrimp and Prawns (*Hippolyte*, *Cragon*, *Palamon*, *Mysis*, etc.), Amphipods and Entomostraca; also many species of Starfishes, Worms, Sea-anemones (*Alcyonium*, *Ascidians*, etc.). The Starfishes and Crustacea are particularly satisfactory. The internal parts are as well preserved as the colors, and in these animals the form is not injured by contraction, as it is apt to be in soft bodied animals, either by alcohol or glycerine. The only precaution taken was to use *very heavy* glycerine, and to keep up the strength by transferring the specimens to new as soon as they had given out water enough to weaken it much, repeating the transfer two or three times, according to the size or number of specimens, or until the water was all removed. The old can be used again for the first bath. In many cases the specimens, especially Crustacea, were killed by immersing them for a few minutes in strong alcohol, which aids greatly in the extraction of water, but usually turns the delicate kinds to an opaque, dull white color, but this opacity disappears when they are put in glycerine, and the real colors again appear. Many colors, however, quickly fade or turn red in alcohol, so that such specimens must be put at once into glycerine. Green shades usually turn red almost instantly in alcohol. Specimens of various Lepidopterous larvæ were also well preserved in the same manner.

The expense is usually regarded as an objection to the use of glycerine. The best and strongest can be bought at about \$1 per pound, but recently I have been able to obtain a very dense and colorless article at 42 cents per pound, which is entirely satisfactory. As there is no loss by evaporation, the specimens will keep when once well preserved, if merely covered by it. The expense for small and medium sized specimens is not much more than for alcohol.—A. E. VERRILL, *Yale College*.

DOES THE PRAIRIE-DOG REQUIRE ANY WATER?—Prairie-dog towns on the Plains are often situated miles away from any water that can be discovered on the surface. It is the general belief among those who are